

THE MARIN BEEK NEWS

Volume 4, Issue 6

June 2012

What You Missed

Our last meeting featured a talk by Serge Labesque. Serge is a local beekeeper living in Sonoma County with many years of beekeeping experience. He has been keeping bees without chemical treatment for over ten years. He has found that, once you adopt a no-treatment policy for bees, it becomes much easier to manage your colonies.

Serge spoke about colony propagation and queen rearing. Here are some of the highlights from Serge's presentation.

Serge encourages propagation of the local survivor stock of bees that have adapted to the conditions in our area. Colony propagation is the heart of good beekeeping.

Colony Evaluation:

Select bees with inherent desirable characteristics for propagation. Serge says that this is not possible if you apply treatments to your bees because you are masking the effects of pathogens by treating. You can't select for resistance to disease if you treat. Bees that are treated in any way are not survivors. To follow this approach, you will need to accept that some bees will die and be eliminated from the gene pool.

Choosing candidates for propagation

1st Spring

The queen should develop nicely through the early part of the year.

1st Fall

Hives should not require feeding.

Good hive configuration created by the bees without intervention.

1st Winter

Successful over wintering and calm tight clusters.

What's the Buzz

Our next meeting will be on Thursday, June 7, 2012 at the American Legion Log Cabin, 20 Veterans Place, San Anselmo, CA, starting at 7:30pm.

Dan Stralka, Marin beekeeper

Dan will be discussing survivor stock bees.

Upcoming Meetings:

June 30 to July 4, 2012

The Marin County Fair

See Page 3 for information about how you can participate.

August 11, 2012

There is no regular meeting of the Marin County Beekeepers in August. Instead, please plan to join us on August 11th at the American Legion Log Cabin for the annual potluck dinner. Sign up will be online this year. go to <http://marinbees.com/wp/marin-county-beekeepers-annual-potluck> for more information on the event and to sign up to bring a dish,

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 What you Missed
- 1 What's the Buzz
- 2 Celebration of the Bees
- 3 Fair News

see *What You Missed* on page

2

Vigorous buildup as they come out of winter.

Year Round

Good behavior and productivity.

Create new colonies from the acceptable mother colonies. Observe the new colonies to determine if the desirable characteristics are transferred to them. This will be an ongoing process over a period of years. Eventually you will have bees that have adapted to local conditions. Serge cautioned that this only works if you don't interfere with natural selection. He also noted that adaptation, which can take place in a few years, is not the same as evolution.

There are three conditions under which bees produce queens.

A. **Swarming:**

This produces the best queens because the bees start feeding the queen larvae right away.

B. **Supersedure:**

When the colony senses that the queen is failing in some way they will select some worker larvae to be raised as queens. The queens produced may not be quite as robust depending on the age of the larvae when the bees decided to supersede the queen.

C. **Emergency:**

If the queen becomes injured or is killed the hive will select larvae to produce a replacement. These larvae may be older than desirable and may not produce good queens.

There are many methods of queen rearing:

Splits

The easiest way to propagate bees is through splits. This uses the emergency response to trigger initiation of queen rearing. To be successful the split will need some young brood, pollen and nectar, some sealed brood, honey, and additional bees including lots of nurse bees.

Grafting

Young larvae are collected from the comb and placed into special queen cups. The queen cups are placed into a cell builder colony, which is usually queenless, stocked with plenty of food and lots of nurse bees.

The nurse bees will start drawing out the queen cups and will eventually create a quantity of capped queen cells. These cells are harvested and placed in nucs where the queens will hatch out and mate and start a new colony.

Hopkins Method

This requires building a special frame which is laid on top of the brood frames. A section of comb with young larvae is placed in the frame so that the opening of the cells points down into the brood nest. Again, the colony should be queenless to trigger the emergency response. The bees will select some of the cells from the comb in the special frame to create new queens.

Serge's Simple Method

Cut a small strip of comb with eggs/young larvae. Mount the strip on the side of a frame of brood using toothpicks that are jammed into the brood comb. Place into the queenless colony. Serge states that this is easy and very successful. If you install the strips of comb directly into mating nucs with the appropriate quantity of nurse bees, pollen, nectar, brood etc., then the process becomes very simple.

For proper mating you will need a large drone population, from good quality stock. Virgin queens prefer at least 70 degree temperatures for mating flights. 20 to 40 days after creating mating nucs check on the queens to see if they have emerged and begun laying, etc. Follow up, looking for good colony characteristics.

Celebration of the Bees



Celebration of the Bees is coming up in a little more than two weeks.

see Celebration of the Bees on page 3

Join us for an afternoon sponsored by Savory Thymes and SuperOrganism on Saturday, June 16, 2012 from 1pm – 4pm at Hillside Gardens in Mill Valley to celebrate the wonder of native and honey bees, both of which are suffering declines due to pressures in their ecosystems.

This is an afternoon of learning and enjoyment all around pollinators (both native and honeybees).

The day will be filled with interesting pollinator related learning and demonstrations:

- Native bee walks led by Dr. Gordon Frankie of the Urban Bee Lab, U.C. Berkeley
- Great Sunflower Project talk by Gretchen LeBuhn, Associate Professor of Biology at SF State
- Demonstration and learning stations presented by the Marin Beekeepers Association
- Skep making demonstration by master weaver Charlie Kennard
- Tasting of local honey
- Tasting of local meads

And what would an afternoon be without delicious foods, drink, and music:

- Savory and sweet afternoon hors d'oeuvres and drink will be served.
- Live Celtic and sunny afternoon music

This is a kid-friendly event so please bring your children.

Tickets are \$35 per person (kids are \$1; 2 maximum per adult please)

We encourage you to dress comfortably and casually.

This event will sell out.

To View invite [click here](#).

To purchase tickets [click here](#).

Inquiries: Jerry Draper celebees@superorg.org

Fair News

2012 Marin County Fair

The county fair is fast approaching. This year the theme is Marin Agriculture, Fresh, Fun and Local and we will be a part of the main exhibit which means that we will have a larger space to show off our bees and their products as well as an opportunity to present our brand of local agriculture and some good PR on honey bees.

First, **JUNE 8 and 9**, please turn in your entries. Even if you did not send in an entry form before hand, you can bring your entries to the back exhibit hall on Friday and Saturday and fill out the paperwork there. The entry categories, descriptions and times are on the Fair web site, <http://www.marinfair.org/images/stories/Competitive%20Exhibits/CompetitiveAdults/MarinCountyFairContestHoney.pdf>.

Don't be shy, because we are an integral part of the theme this year, addition ribbons will be awarded. Please enter whatever you can to demonstrate how industrious the Marin Beekeepers are. Judging will be on Sunday and awards announced at the fair.

Second, we will have a new exhibit space and larger area to display. We will need **3 volunteers** for each time period, a total of 9 for each day. Each volunteer will get a pass for the fair for that day and can spend the rest of the time enjoying the fair. We are trying a new online sign up, so please sign up at <http://marinbees.com/wp/marin-county-fair-commitments-table>

Finally, to make the exhibit more LOCAL, can you please email any photos you have of Marin Beekeepers and their hives to Dan Stralka at Stralka.Daniel@epamail.epa.gov., photos of our local characters and their bees, of course. Dan is planning on having several photographs enlarged for display at the booth.

Let's make this one of our best fair turnouts.
June 30th to July 4th

MARIN COUNTY FAIR!